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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION.

December 26, 1918.—Ordered to be printed.

U.S. Congress. Senate

Mr. Smith of Georgia, from the Committee on Education and Labor, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany S. 4922.]

The Committee on Education and Labor, to whom was referred the bill (S. 4922) providing for the promotion of vocational rehabilitation of persons disabled in industry or otherwise and their return to civil employment, having considered the same, report it favorably and recommend its passage with the amendments hereinafter proposed.

No one appeared against the bill at the joint public hearing conducted for three days by the Committees on Education of Senate and House. Representatives of many different interests were present in person or by letter and gave hearty indorsement to the measure. These included State compensation boards, State boards for vocational education, the American Federation of Labor, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, the National Manufacturers' Association, the American Society for Social Legislation, the National Antituberculosis Society, the American Museum of Safety, the United States Employees' Compensation Commission, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor.

In order to promote self-dependency among our people and to conserve the labor power of the country, this bill provides an annual grant to aid the States in giving vocational education to persons so disabled in their employment or otherwise that they can not follow their old occupation successfully or take up a new one without special training.

The hearings before the committee showed that each year a total of not less than three-quarters of a million casualties occur among our wageworkers in all occupations. This means that each year there are added to the army of the permanently disabled tens of thousands of new recruits. A conservative estimate seems to show that there are at the present time not less than 500,000 persons of working age who are suffering from permanent vocational handicaps.

With the exception of a few experiments by private a[illegible] provision, public or private, has ever been made in this co[illegible] retraining and placing those handicapped persons who without t[illegible] help have been doomed to mendicancy, or dependency, or casual and uncertain employment or employment in low-grade positions in which they eke out an unhappy existence. The loss to the man and his dependents is great, but in the aggregate the loss to the Nation in man power, in undeveloped skills and talents, and in the support of dependency is enormous.

The experience of our allies in giving vocational rehabilitation to disabled soldiers and sailors during the past four years shows that handicapped men are eager to take training, that employers are glad to employ such men after they have been properly prepared for their work, and that with very few exceptions every disabled man with proper guidance and training can be placed in a desirable position where he can compete with normal men. Indeed, it is a very common thing for the disabled soldier or sailor after training to be placed in a better position than the one he held before the war. While the program of vocational rehabilitation for our own disabled soldiers and sailors has just begun, the experience of the Federal Board for Vocational Education justifies the expectation that the results in this country will be at least equally good. This evidence shows that if an efficient plan for the vocational rehabilitation of the disabled wageworker were developed by the States with the encouragement of the National Government, practically everyone of the great army of handicapped men in our midst could be made a national asset instead of a national liability; and the expenditure annually of a small amount of money among the States by the National Government would be a wise investment yielding annually large and rich dividends in increased earning power for the individual, with all this means in comfort and happiness for himself and his dependents and increased economic and social efficiency and well-being for the Nation.

The shortage of labor in all the belligerent countries of Europe, which was an inevitable consequence of the most destructive war in history, is certain to produce a corresponding shortage of labor in this country by reversing so far as our foreign population is concerned the current of migration. At least it is certain that for many years to come there will be no migration to this country at all comparable to that which was taking place before the war. This means an inevitable labor shortage which will require the immediate and continuous development and conservation of our own human resources to meet and overcome.

An analysis of industrial occupations just made by the Federal Board for Vocational Education covering a very wide field of economic activities makes it very clear that there is some place in industry for every disabled man, even the blind or the legless man, in which he can with proper guidance and training compete on equal terms with normal men. In our highly specialized modern industrial life, with its minute division of employments and tasks, it is possible, therefore, for practically every handicapped man under an intelligent program of vocational rehabilitation to discharge acceptably some task as a full substitute for a normal man. In each

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individual case the problem is simply one of selecting the right employment and of training for it.

A Nation-wide program among all the States for the vocational retraining and placement of disabled persons which will restore them to efficient service in our productive and commercial life is one obvious and feasible means for meeting our shortage of labor. Furthermore, to continue to neglect the development and utilization of the great human resources of the army of handicapped people increasing in size every year with the growth of our population is a national folly more inexcusable, if anything, than any failure to develop our forests, to harness our waterpower, or to preserve the fertility of our soil.

Practically all of the arguments which have been presented in support of the program of vocational reeducation of disabled soldiers and sailors may be urged with equal force in support of the present measure. These were fully developed in the hearings and in the discussion before Congress when the vocational rehabilitation act was enacted, and need not be given here. The vocational rehabilitation act, however, provided that the entire cost of instruction for disabled soldiers and sailors, including support while in training, should be borne by the National Government. By the present bill the States would bear the entire cost of giving vocational instruction to disabled civilian workers but would receive annually from the National Government a small allotment of money to be used as partial reimbursement for work done by the State according to plans approved by the Federal Board for Vocational Education. That this assistance by the National Government would encourage the States to develop the work rapidly is shown by the rapid growth of the land-grant colleges where the expenditures by the States have been 20 times as great as the amounts received under numerous Federal acts for various purposes.

Clearly, if it was wise as a business investment and as a policy of national conservation of human resources to provide for the instruction and full support of disabled soldiers and sailors at the expense of the National Government, it is equally wise and equitable that the National Government shall provide annually a smaller sum of money to enable the States to inaugurate and maintain a plan of vocational instruction for that much larger army of persons who become disabled through no fault of their own in the performamce of duties necessary to the comfort and the prosperity of the country.

The bill seems to be the third and necessary final step in a program of nation wide vocational education which was initiated by the vocational education act (February, 1917). This assists the States in providing vocational education for the normal boys and girls and men and women employed in wage-earning occupations. The same benefit was extended by providing special instruction for those who had been handicapped in the war for our liberties. But this group of handicapped persons, worthy as they are and sacred as is the task of helping them, is small indeed compared to the great army of handicapped civilian workers. It remains to provide through this present bill a scheme whereby the States, in conjunction with the National Government, may offer to every disabled wageworker the chance to get the help with which he may find his place in society and carry on successfully as a self-dependent worker and citizen.

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There is nothing new in the proposition to extend the benefits of vocational education through special training to handicapped wage workers. The principle of national grants for these purposes for vocational education has been established through a long series of acts culminating in the vocational education act of 1917. The principle of special training for handicapped persons was established by the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1918. Precedent as well as justice speak in favor of this present bill.

The time seems ripe for the enactment of this bill now. Public sentiment from every quarter has as the result of the war become focused on the need for the conservation of our human resources and the worth of the handicapped man made fit for his work by special advisement training and placement. The administrative machinery necessary for carrying out a cooperative program between the State and National Governments for the vocational rehabilitation of the disabled wage worker has already been established by previous State and Federal laws. Federal and State boards for vocational education are already engaged in the same more general task for the normal worker.

By the vocational rehabilitation act, the Federal Board for Vocational Education was charged with the duty of providing for vocational advisement, training, and placement for those disabled in the war. The present bill adds to the board the further duty of administering a national grant to the States for the disabled workers, to be administered by the State boards for vocational education. As the result of its work with the disabled soldier and sailor the Federal board has already gained and is constantly gaining information and experience with regard to the handicapped man and is building up a corps of experts with special experience in the many and difficult problems connected with the vocational restoration of the disabled man. All of this will be a priceless asset for the work of training and placing those disabled while in the performance of their daily tasks. If used now all this will be made a permanent contribution to the solution of a problem which the National Government must inevitably aid the States in solving. Otherwise the loss in money, delay, and intelligent solution of the matter will be great.

The committee agreed that these amendments be made to the bill (S. 4922) before reporting the same: In line 4 of page 1 strike out the word "industry" and substitute in place thereof the word "occupations." In line 7 of page 8 insert after the word "accepted" the words "together with the names of the donors and the respective amounts contributed by each."

With these changes the committee reports the bill favorably and recommends its passage.

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